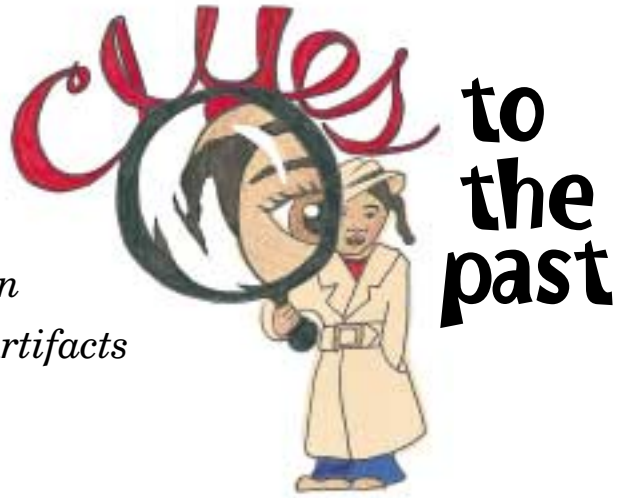


Have you ever wondered how historians know what they know? They are a lot like detectives who look for clues to help solve the mysteries of the past. Historians often study artifacts as clues to the past. Artifacts are objects made by humans.



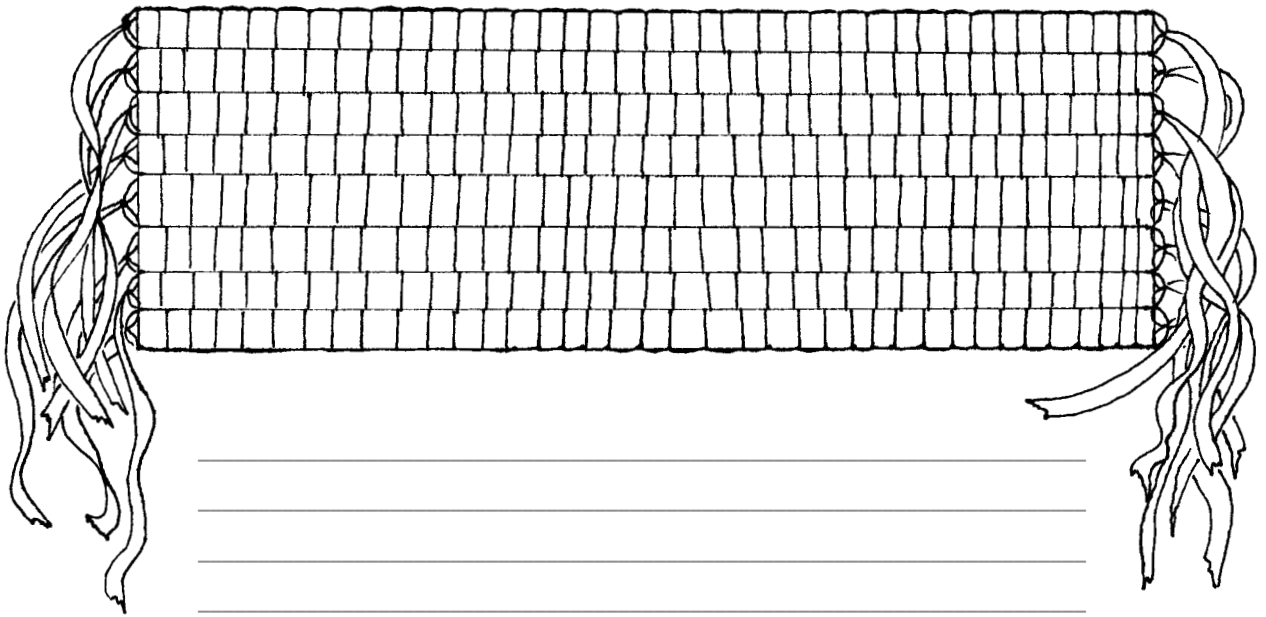
Ohio Historical Society

At the signing of the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, this wampum belt was given as a symbol of an end to the conflicts in Ohio. Today, this artifact is in Ohio.

Wampum belts were rows of beads woven into strips by Native Americans. The Indians took shells and drilled holes into them, making beads about 3/8-inch long. The beads were woven together with strong cords, forming long strings or belts several inches wide and of varying length. They were ceremonial, sacred objects. (They were not used to hold pants up.) Because the Indians had no written language, one use of a wampum belt was as a record of an agreement, like paper contracts people sign today.

The word “wampum” is from the Narragansett Indian word for white shell beads. At first the only colors used were white and dark purple. White, tube-shaped beads were made from the center of Atlantic whelk shells and purple beads were made from Quahog shells. Later on, different colors and bead materials were used.

By the 1700s, glass beads from European traders and small round beads were being woven into belts.



Design Your Own **WAMPUM BELT**

First, think about who you would give the belt to and what it would signify. Use any shapes and colors that have important meanings to you. Using the outline above, fill in the squares with different colors to make your design. Write about your belt and its meaning. The following list gives examples of Native American wampum belt colors and designs:

- white means peace
- blue means male or warrior
- zig-zags and red and white together mean war
- a lot of purple is used if the agreement is especially important, serious or sad